



NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 14, 2007

07-53

Motorists Set New Record for Wearing Seat Belts

94.6 percent of Motorists are Buckling-up In California

(SAN DIEGO) Seat belt usage by California motorists is at a new record high, 94.6 percent, according to an annual survey commissioned by the state Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). That's an improvement of more than 2 percent during the past two years. In 2005, the figure was 92.5 percent. In 2006 it rose to 93.4 percent.

"These numbers are literally the difference between life and death. The increase this year means an estimated 372,000 more Californians are buckling up," said Business, Transportation and Housing Secretary Dale Bonner, who announced the new record today at the annual California Law Enforcement Challenge Awards in San Diego.

The CHP and local police departments have increased public awareness of the life-saving benefits of wearing a seat belt during the past year. OTS, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, has provided funding for officer overtime for enforcement efforts and for educational outreach programs to encourage people to always wear their seat belts.

"These aren't just numbers. They are real lives saved and real tragedies averted," said CHP Commissioner Mike Brown.

"These numbers are great, but we won't rest until we've convinced everyone that wearing their seat belt is the smart thing to do," stated OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. "It takes just two seconds to save a life."

In 2006, the CHP issued 254,328 citations for people not wearing their seat belts. Fines have been significantly increased the past two years.

The combination of enforcement and education is the key to changing behavior. Commissioner Brown warns that CHP officers will continue to aggressively seek out those holdouts who still don't get the message.

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